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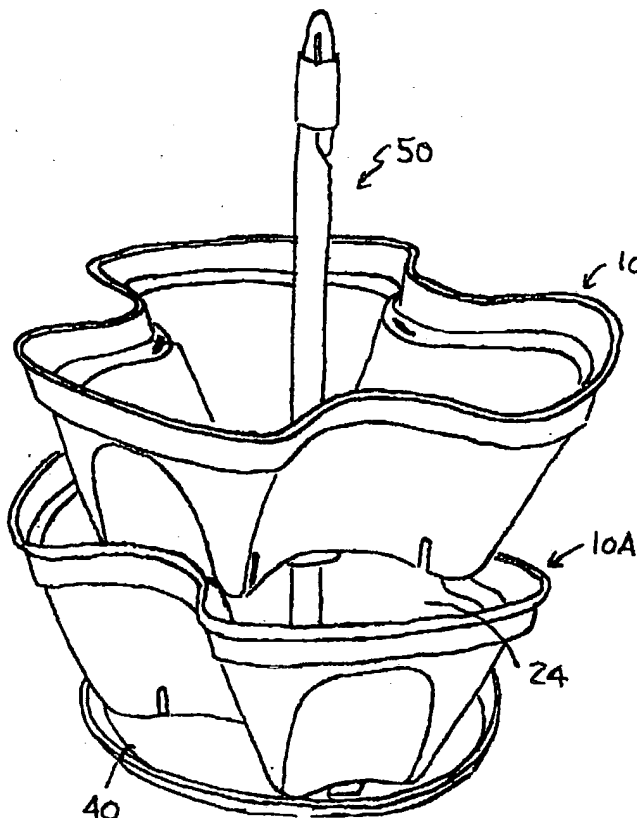
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(54) Title: STACKABLE PLANT POT

(57) Abstract

Stackable plant pot (10) comprises three lobe sections with bridge sections interconnecting the lobe sections to define the pot (10). Each of the lobe sections is identical in size and shape and is spaced equally about a central axis of the pot (10). Several pots (10) can be stacked with the lobe sections of each pot (10) being radially aligned with the bridge sections of the pot (10A) on top of which it is directly stacked. An engagement means is arranged on the lower portion of each lobe section and upper portion of each bridge section respectively, so as they can engage when the pots (10) are stacked. An entire stack of pots (10) can be watered by supplying water to the uppermost pot (10) and excess water passes through each pot (10) and ultimately drains into saucer (40) fitted to the lowermost pot (10A). A central hole is provided through the centre of the base of each pot (10) and enables use of a hanging device (50) which is secured to saucer (40) to hang the stack of pots (10) from a fixed point.



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STACKABLE PLANT POT

Technical Field

The present invention relates to plant pots and in particular to a stackable plant pot.

5 Background of the Invention

Various forms of plant pots are known for growing plants. Typical plant pots are either of generally cylindrical, frustoconical or rectangular prism form. Frustoconical type plant pots are advantageous over cylindrical or rectangular prism type pots in that they are often able to be located at least partially within
10 each other for transport, storage and display, thereby realising considerable space savings. Generally, they can not, however, be stacked on top of each other in any suitable manner for use.

Many pot plant enthusiasts like to arrange several pots in a generally vertical relationship for particular aesthetic appeal and saving of space. Such
15 an arrangement currently typically depends on use of a separate stand to mount the pots or hanging of one pot from another with chains or the like.

Several attempts have been made to provide stackable plant pots. One such attempt is disclosed in Australian patent No.634522 in the name of Gro-max Systems, Inc. This patent discloses a multiplicity of plant pots having an
20 essentially square-shaped cross section. The plant pots can be stacked one on top of another by having each plant pot rotated approximately 45° about a common axis relative to an adjacent plant pot. The adjacent plant pots are seated one on top of the other, thereby requiring that the individual plant pots (particularly those located towards the bottom) are particularly strong and rigid.
25 This arrangement provides only a very small useable area for growing plants, namely, the small corner portions which protrude beyond the pot immediately above. Also, this arrangement of plant pots is not adapted to be hung or suspended.

Australian patent No.586493, in the name of Stephen Fraknoi, also
30 discloses an arrangement of stacked plant pots. Each pot is adapted to be seated upon a pot located immediately beneath it. In order to support the weight of a series of stacked pots, each individual pot must be particularly strong so that

pots near the base of the arrangement are not squashed or deformed. Also, the particular design and construction of each individual pot is quite complex and it would be difficult and expensive to manufacture. This particular arrangement of plant pots is also not adapted to be hung or suspended.

5 European patent No.0 142 471, in the name of Werner Gerber, discloses a plant pot adapted to be stacked one on top of another. The plant pot of this disclosure is relatively flimsy and the stacking of three or more plant pots (especially if they contain soil) is likely to cause the lower pots in the arrangement to collapse or deform. The pots of this disclosure have connecting
10 means comprising protruding tabs extending from an upper rim of each pot for insertion in a corresponding slot in a base of an adjoining pot. This arrangement for connecting adjacent pots is awkward for a user, given the relatively small sizes of the corresponding protrusions and slots. The arrangement also provides no added strength to the arrangement of pots.

15 In all of the plant pots described above, the means for securing one pot on top of another is very flimsy and/or quite difficult to align. The weight imposed on a pot by a series of pots stacked above it can be substantial and can cause a degree of compression which may be sufficient to break the securing means and to break or deform the lower pot(s).

20 In the context of this specification the term "stackable" means able to be arranged on top of one another.

Object of the Invention

The present invention is directed to ameliorating the abovementioned problems and, in particular, to providing a stackable plant pot which is capable
25 of holding a plant and being simultaneously stacked on top of another substantially identical stackable plant pot holding a plant. The invention is further intended to provide a stackable plant pot which can be stacked with two or more other such pots in a stable arrangement, such that the addition of several pots does not substantially adversely affect the shape of the lower pots
30 in the stack nor the stability of the stack. The invention is also directed to providing a stack of plant pots which in use can be suspended by a chain, cord or rod.

Summary of the Invention

According to this invention there is provided a plant pot which, in use, is adapted to be stacked with one or more other similar plant pots, wherein:

said plant pot includes a base portion, a rim portion and a surrounding
5 wall extending between the base and rim portions in inwardly inclined manner from the rim portion towards the base portion such as to allow locating one such pot within another such pot and to define a pot cavity;

the wall defines a plurality of radially extending lobe sections and bridge sections interconnecting the lobe sections,

10 the rim portion includes a plurality of lobe rims and bridge rims in accordance with the lobe and bridge sections,

the base portion includes a plurality of recesses, one such recess being formed in an underside of each lobe section,

the bridge rims and recesses being adapted and shaped so that, when
15 two or more plant pots are stacked, each bridge rim of a first plant pot may be received within a recess of another plant pot stacked above the first plant pot.

It is preferred that each recess includes a channel shaped so as to receive a substantial proportion of a bridge rim. Each channel and bridge rim may be shaped so that a roof of a channel is adapted to be seated upon a
20 bridge rim.

It is further preferred that a lower end of the wall is lower than the roof of each channel.

It is preferred that the upper rim includes a laterally protruding ridge or overhanging lip. This will provide added strength to the plant pot and inhibit
25 deformation of the upper rim when weight is applied to it.

It is also preferred that the tapering of the wall be sufficient so that, when in use, the vertical growth of a plant in a lower pot is not substantially obstructed. To this end, it is further preferred that the section of the wall beneath each lobe rim includes a concave depression.

30 It is further preferred that the plant pot has a centrally located shaft hole in the base portion. This hole is adapted to receive a support shaft, support chain or support cord. It may also receive an irrigation hose.

The support shaft, chain or cord may be used for hanging the pot or a stack of pots. In this case, the support shaft, chain or cord may incorporate or be connected to support means which underlies the base portion of the lowermost pot.

- 5 Typically said lobe sections of the plant pot are substantially radially aligned with said bridge sections of another pot when said pot is stacked on top of said other pot.

Typically said wall tapers from said upper rim to said base portion such that said pot can selectively be located at least partially within said other pot with
10 lobe sections of said pot substantially radially aligned with lobe sections of said other pot and with said wall of said pot at least partially located within said cavity of said other pot. This orientation is useful when storing or transporting empty pots.

- Typically, each said lobe section is substantially identical in size and
15 shape.

Typically, each said lobe section is spaced substantially equally about a central axis of said pot.

- The upper lip may be defined by a series of linked arcs, preferably being convex arcs at each said lobe section and concave arcs at each said bridge
20 section.

Alternatively, said upper lip is generally defined by a series of substantially straight sections. The straight sections of each lobe section are located radially more distant from a central axis of the pot than the straight sections of each bridge section.

- 25 Preferably said pot includes at least one drainage hole in a lower portion of at least one of said lobe sections.

Typically said pot comprises three said lobe sections.

Preferably said stackable plant pot is moulded from plastic.

There is further disclosed herein a stack of plant pots including:

- 30 a plurality of said stackable plant pots (as defined hereinbefore) stacked on top of each other such that said lobe sections of a given said pot are substantially radially aligned with said bridge sections of the pot on top of which

said given pot is stacked.

Preferably said stack of plant pots further includes a saucer for collecting drainage water from said pots, said saucer being located underneath the lowermost said pot of said stack.

- 5 Preferably said stack of plant pots further includes a hanging device for hanging said pots and said saucer. Typically, the hanging device may be a shaft, chain or cord which is secured to a support means which underlies the base portion of the lowermost pot. The support means may be the saucer.

There is further disclosed herein a hanging device for hanging a plant
10 pot, said hanging device including:

a longitudinally extending shaft having a central portion and first and second ends, said first and second ends each respectively adapted to be folded over first and second generally transversely extending supporting members so as to form first and second shaft tail portions each extending back along said
15 central portion,

first and second sleeves each respectively adapted to secure said first and second tail portions to said central portion adjacent said first and second supporting members, and

a connector including said second supporting member and adapted to be
20 secured to said plant pot.

Typically said connector includes:

an eyelet including said second supporting member and further including a threaded shaft adapted to pass through a hole provided in each of said plant pot and a saucer located beneath said plant pot, and

- 25 a nut adapted to threadingly engage said threaded shaft to secure said connector to said plant pot and said saucer.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Preferred forms of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

- 30 Figure 1 is a plan view of a stackable plant pot according to a first embodiment of the current invention.

Figure 2 is a front elevation view of the stackable plant pot of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the stackable plant pot of Figure 1.

Figure 4 is a perspective view of an eyelet of a hanging device.

Figure 5 is a plan view of a nut of a hanging device.

Figure 6a is a front elevation view of a hanging device.

5 Figure 6b is a front elevation view of two stackable plant pots of Figure 1, one stacked on top of the other, secured with the hanging device of Figure 6a.

Figure 7 is a perspective view of the two stackable plant pots of Figure 6.

Figure 8 is a perspective view of two stackable plant pots of Figure 1, one stacked in the other.

10 Figure 9 is a plan view of a stackable plant pot according to a second embodiment of the current invention.

Figure 10 is a front elevation view of the stackable plant pot of Figure 9.

Figure 11 is a perspective view of the stackable plant pot of Figure 9.

15 Figure 12 is a perspective view of two stackable plant pots of Figure 9, one stacked on top of the other.

Figure 13 is a perspective view of two stackable plant pots of Figure 9, one stacked in the other.

Figure 14 is a cross-sectional side view of the stackable plant pot of Figure 9 seated on a drainage saucer which is secured to a supporting chain.

20 Figure 15 is a perspective view of a stack of four stackable plant pots according to a preferred embodiment of this invention, seated on a drainage saucer which is secured to a supporting chain.

Figure 16 is a perspective view of the stack of stackable plant pots shown in Figure 15, further showing an irrigation system incorporated therein.

25 Figure 17 is actually a series of figures showing a drainage saucer and various aspects and components of such drainage saucer.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

A stackable plant pot 10 according to a first embodiment, as depicted in Figures 1 through 3 comprises three lobe sections 11 with bridge sections 13
30 interconnecting the lobe sections 11 to define the pot 10. Here each of the lobe sections 11 is identical in size and shape and is spaced equally about a central axis of the pot 10. The lobe sections 11 and bridge sections 13 together define

a lip 15 at an upper end of the pot 10, a base at a lower end of the pot 10 and a wall extending from the lip 15 to the base 17 to define a cavity 14 for holding a plant.

In this embodiment the lip 15 is formed from a series of linked arcs to give
5 the pot 10 a rounded appearance. Convex arcs define the portions of lip 15 at the lobe sections 11, whilst concave arcs define the portions of lip 15 at the bridge sections. The wall 16 subtends from the lip 15 and tapers toward the base 17. The pot 10 is typically moulded from a plastic material.

A downwardly protruding flange 18 is provided on the lower portion of
10 each lobe section 11. Here each flange 18 is located on the base 17 near the junction with the wall 16. A slot 19 is provided in the upper portion of each bridge section 13, each sized and shaped to accept a flange 18. Here the slots 19 are located on the lip 15. The slots 19 and flanges 18 are sized and located such that, when the pot 10 is stacked centrally on top of a further identical pot
15 10A with the lobe sections of the pot 10 radially aligned with the bridge sections of the further pot 10A, each of the slots 19 of the further pot 10A receives a corresponding flange of the pot 10, as depicted in Figures 6 and 7. Stacking of the pots 10, 10A in this manner supports the pot 10 above the cavity 14 of the further pot 10A.

20 In the current embodiment a concave depression 20 is formed in the wall 16 at each lobe section 11 such that the junction 23 between the wall 16 and base 17 adjacent to each flange 18 forms an arc which generally follows the lip 15 of the further pot 10A adjacent to the slot 19. This prevents the otherwise concave wall 16 at the lobe section 11 of the pot 10A from interfering with the lip
25 15 of the further pot 10A, thereby allowing the flange 18 and slot 19 to freely engage.

Several pots 10 can be stacked in this manner with the lobe sections 11 of each pot 10 being radially aligned with the bridge sections 13 of the pot 10 on top of which it is directly stacked. The flanges 18 and slots 19 may be arranged
30 elsewhere on the lower portion of each lobe section 11 and upper portion of each bridge section 13 respectively, so long as they can engage when the pots 10 are stacked in the manner described. Plants can be grown in at least regions

24 of the cavity 14 corresponding to the lobe sections 11 of each pot 10 in a stack and in the entire cavity 14 of the uppermost pot 10, enabling a compact and attractive arrangement of plants to be grown and displayed.

The tapered wall 16 also allows several pots 10 to each be located substantially within a pot 10 directly therebelow, as shown in Figure 8, if the lobe sections 11 of successive pots 10 are radially aligned such that each pot 10 fits at least partially within the cavity of the pot 10 therebelow. This greatly saves space for the transport, storage and display of the pots 10.

Each of the pots 10 is provided with a plurality of drainage holes 21 through the lower portions of the lobe section 11 and or bridge section 13. The holes are typically located through or adjacent to the base 17. Excess water having passed through soil in each pot 10 in a stack drains through the drainage holes 21 and into the cavity 14 of the pot 10 onto which it is directly stacked. An entire stack of pots 10 can hence be watered by supplying water to the uppermost pot 10 (providing of course that sufficient water is supplied). The lowermost pot 10 in a stack typically has a saucer 40 fitted to its base 17 to collect water which drains through the drainage holes 21 of the lowermost pot 10. A rim 41 is provided around a circumference of the saucer 40 to contain drainage water.

In the current embodiment a central hole 22 is provided through the centre of the base 17 of the pot 10. The central hole 22 enables use of a hanging device 50 to hang a stack of pots 10 from a fixed point. The preferred hanging device 50, as depicted in Figures 4 through 6b, comprises a longitudinally extending shaft 51, typically a tube cut from a section of PVC irrigation hose, having first and second ends 51a and 51b and a central portion. The first end 51a is folded over a generally transversely extending first support member (not shown), such as a hook or a ring, so as to form a first tail portion 51a extending back along the length of the central portion of the shaft 51. A first sleeve 52, typically made of polythene, is slid along the shaft 51 toward the first support member and over the first tail portion 51a to secure the first tail portion 51a to the central portion of the shaft 51 adjacent the first support member.

Similarly the shaft second end 51b is folded over second transversely

extending support member 53 and secured to the central portion of the shaft 51 by means of a second sleeve 54. The second support member 54 forms part of a connector 55 adapted to be secured to the plant pot 10. The connector 55 here comprises an eyelet 56 incorporating the second support member 53 such
5 that the shaft second end is passed through the eyelet 56. The eyelet 56 also includes a threaded shaft 57 which is passed through the central hole 22 provided in the plant pot 10 and the corresponding hole 43 in a saucer 40 located beneath the plant pot 10. A threaded nut 58 is then threadingly engaged onto the threaded shaft 57 to secure the connector 55 to the plant pot
10 10 and saucer 40. Here a recess 42 is provided in the saucer 40 concentric with the hole 43 such that the nut 58 seats within the recess 42.

When a number of plant pots 10 are formed in a stack, successive plant pots 10 are each slid onto the shaft 51 via their central hole 22 prior to sliding of the first sleeve 52 over the shaft 51 and securing of the shaft first end 51a to the
15 first support member.

a second embodiment of the plant pot is depicted in Figures 9 through 11. The stackable plant pot 110 according to this embodiment similarly comprises three lobe sections 111 and three bridge sections 113. This pot 110, however, is chiefly constructed of a series of straight lines and flat surfaces with sharper
20 edges giving a visually distinct appearance to the pot 10 of the first embodiment.

Rather than utilising a flange/slot arrangement for stacking of successive pots 110 on top of each other, a recess 123 is formed in the base 117 of the pot 110 adjacent to the wall 116 at each lobe section 111. When the pot 110 is stacked centrally on top of a further like pot 110A with the lobe sections 111 of
25 the pot 110 radially aligning with the bridge sections 113 of the further pot 11A, as shown in Figure 12, the recess 123 of each lobe section 111 of the pot 110 fits over the lip 115 of the further pot 110A at each bridge section 113, thereby securely stacking the pot 110 on top of the further pot 110A. The wall 116 extends beyond the plane of the base 117 at each lobe section 111 adjacent to
30 the recess 123 such that a protruding edge 124 is formed at each lobe section 111. The protruding edges 124 of the lowermost pot 110 in a stack can be used to support the pots 110 in the saucer 40 placed thereunder for collecting

drainage water from the drainage holes 121 as in the first embodiment. The hanging device 50 can also be used with the pot 110 of the second embodiment in a similar manner to the pot 10 of the first embodiment.

The walls 116 of the pot 110 are also tapered allowing several pots 110
5 to each be located substantially within a pot 10 directly therebelow, as shown in Figure 13, if the lobe sections 110 of successive pots 110 are radially aligned such that each pot 110 fits at least partially within the cavity of the pot 110 into which it is stacked.

As shown in Figures 14 - 16, a plant pot according to this invention or a
10 stack of such plant pots can be hung or suspended by a single chain attached to a drainage saucer. A suitable drainage saucer and various aspects and components of it are shown in Figure 17.

Further similar embodiments are also envisaged which provide only two lobe and bridge sections, or four or more lobe sections. Other similar stacking
15 engagement mechanisms replacing the slot/flange and recess/lip mechanisms of the first and second embodiments may also be provided to engage the lobe sections with bridge sections. Such stacking mechanisms need not be provided on each lobe section and bridge section if more than two lobe sections are provided, but at least two lobe sections must engage bridge sections to enable a
20 stable stack of pots to be arranged. Each lobe section and bridge section need not be identical in size and shape, so long as at least two lobe sections and bridge sections can engage to provide a suitable stack.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A plant pot which, in use, is adapted to be stacked with one or more other similar plant pots, wherein:

said plant pot includes a base portion, a rim portion and a surrounding wall extending between the base and rim portions in inwardly inclined manner from the rim portion towards the base portion such as to allow locating one such pot within another such pot and to define a pot cavity; the wall defines a plurality of radially extending lobe sections and bridge sections interconnecting the lobe sections,

the rim portion includes a plurality of lobe rims and bridge rims in accordance with the lobe and bridge sections,

the base portion includes a plurality of recesses, one such recess being formed in an underside of each lobe section,

the bridge rims and recesses being adapted and shaped so that, when two or more plant pots are stacked, each bridge rim of a first plant pot may be received within a recess of another plant pot stacked above the first plant pot.
2. A plant pot according to claim 1, wherein each recess includes a channel shaped so as to receive a substantial proportion of a bridge rim.
3. A plant pot according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein each channel and bridge rim is shaped so that a roof of a channel is adapted to be seated upon a bridge rim.
4. A plant pot according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein a lower end of the wall is positioned lower than the roof of each channel.
5. A plant pot according to any one of claims 1 to 4 wherein the rim portion includes a laterally protruding ridge or overhanging lip.
6. A plant pot according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein the tapering of

the wall is sufficient so that, when in use, the vertical growth of a plant in a lower plant pot is substantially unobstructed.

7. A plant pot according to claim 6 wherein a section of the wall beneath each lobe rim includes a concave depression.

8. A plant pot according to any one of claims 1 to 7 wherein the plant pot has a centrally located shaft hole in the base portion.

9. A plant pot according to claim 8 wherein the hole is adapted to receive a support shaft, support chain or support cord.

10. A plant pot according to claim 8 or 9 wherein the hole is adapted also to receive an irrigation hose or pipe.

11. A plant pot according to claim 9 or 10 wherein the support shaft, chain or cord incorporates or is connected to support means which underlies the base portion of the lowermost pot.

12. A plant pot according to any one of claims 1 to 11 wherein each said lobe section is substantially identical in size and shape.

13. A plant pot according to any one of claims 1 to 12 wherein each said lobe section is spaced substantially equally about a central axis of said pot.

14. A plant pot according to any one of claims 1 to 13 wherein the rim portion is defined by a series of linked arcs, preferably being convex arcs at each said lobe section and concave arcs at each said bridge section.

15. A plant pot according to claim 13 wherein the rim portion is defined by a series of substantially straight sections in which the straight sections of each lobe section are located radially more distant from the central axis of said pot

than the straight sections of each bridge section.

16. A stack of plant pots including:

a plurality of stackable plant pots (as defined hereinbefore) stacked on top of each other such that said lobe sections of a given said pot are substantially radially aligned with said bridge sections of the pot on top of which said given pot is stacked.

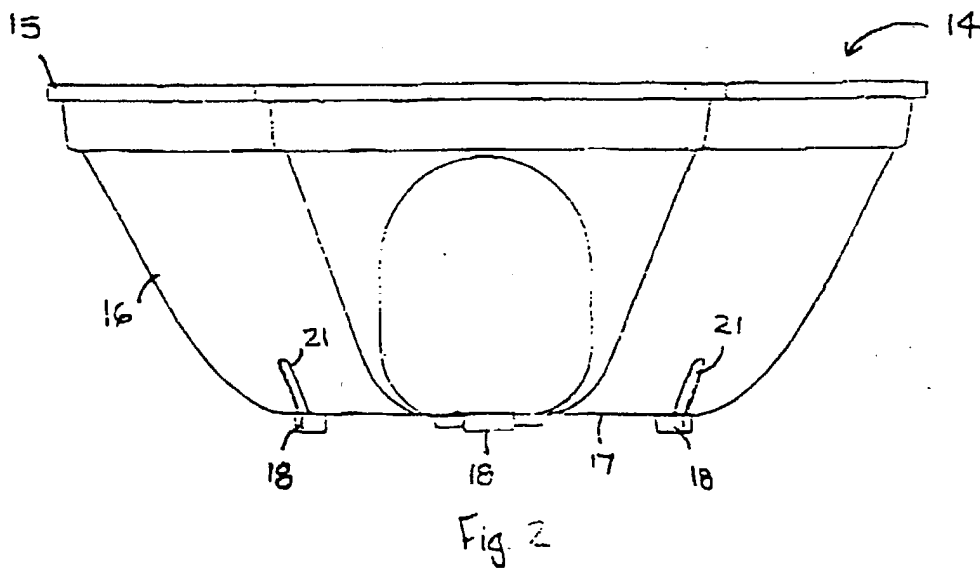
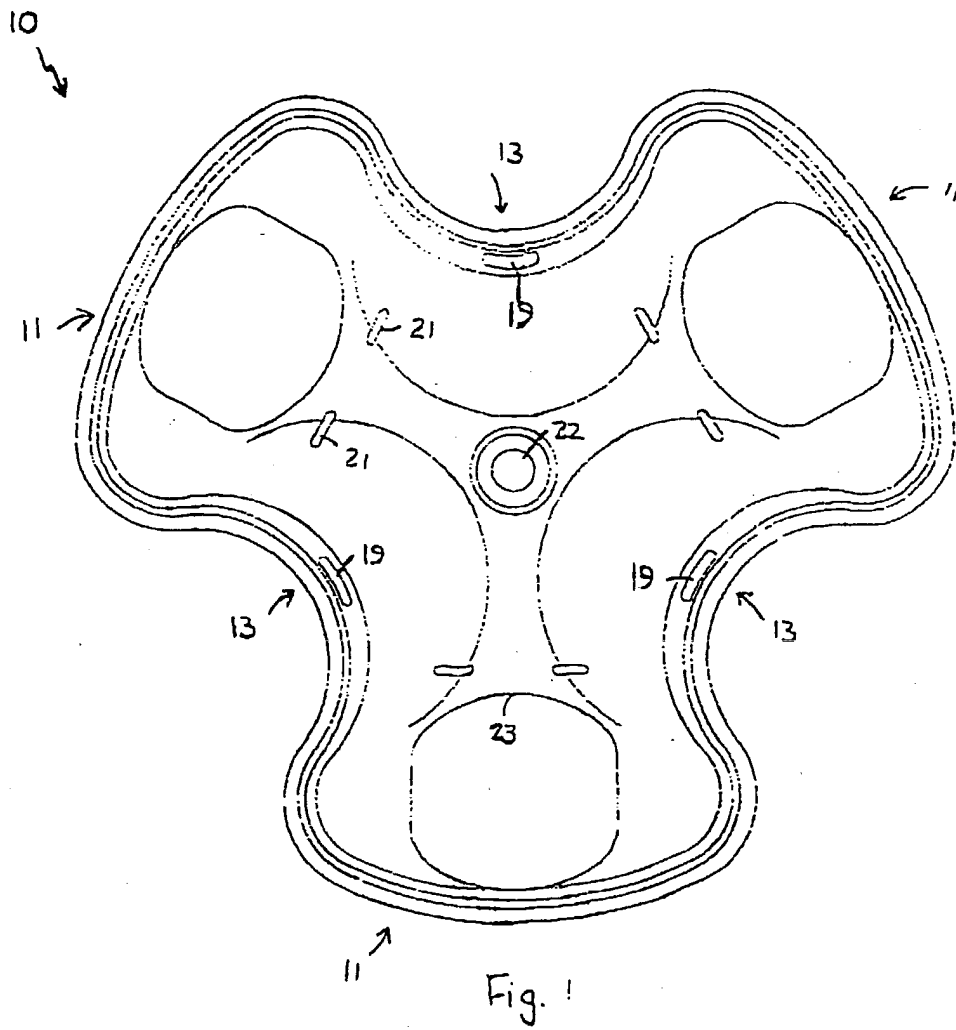
17. A stack of plant pots according to claim 16 further including a saucer for collecting drainage water from said pots, said saucer being located underneath the lowermost said plant pot of said stack.

18. A stack of plant pots according to claim 17 further including a hanging device for hanging said stack.

19. A stack of plant pots according to claim 18 wherein, the hanging device is a shaft, chain or cord which is secured to a support means which underlies the base portion of the lowermost plant pot.

20. A stack of plant pots according to claim 19 wherein the support means is the saucer.

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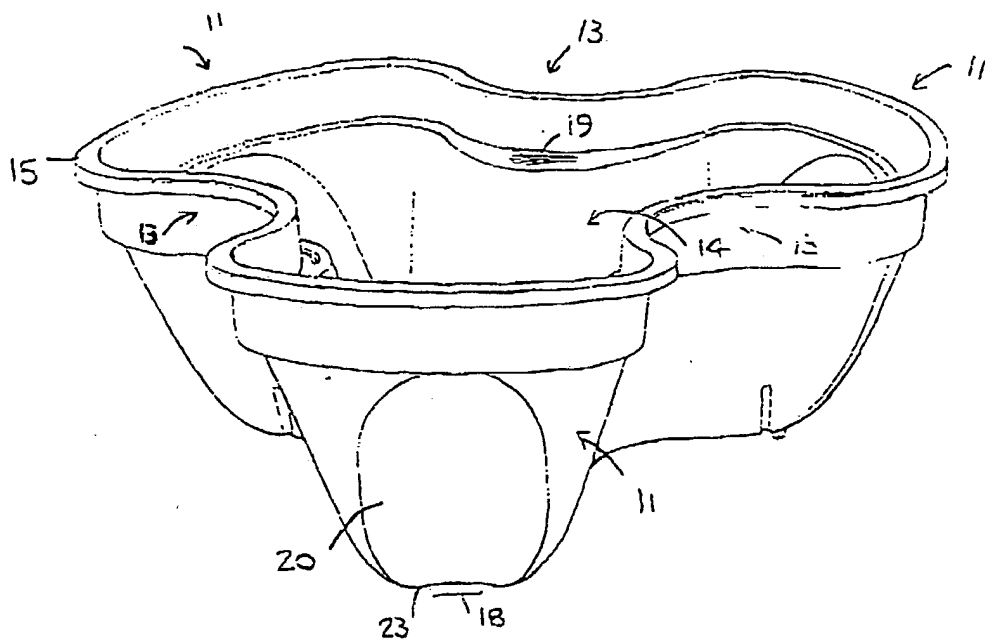


Fig 3

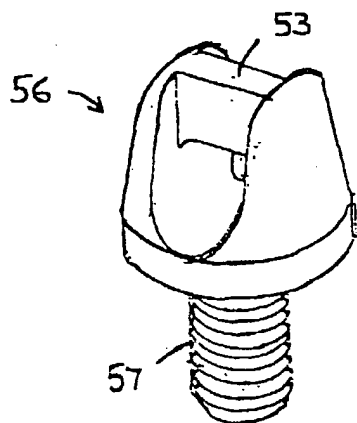


Fig. 4

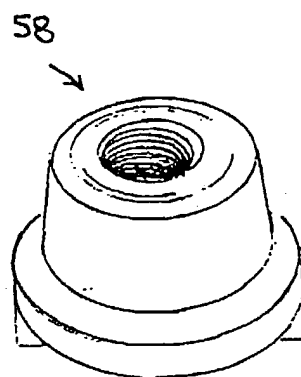


Fig. 5

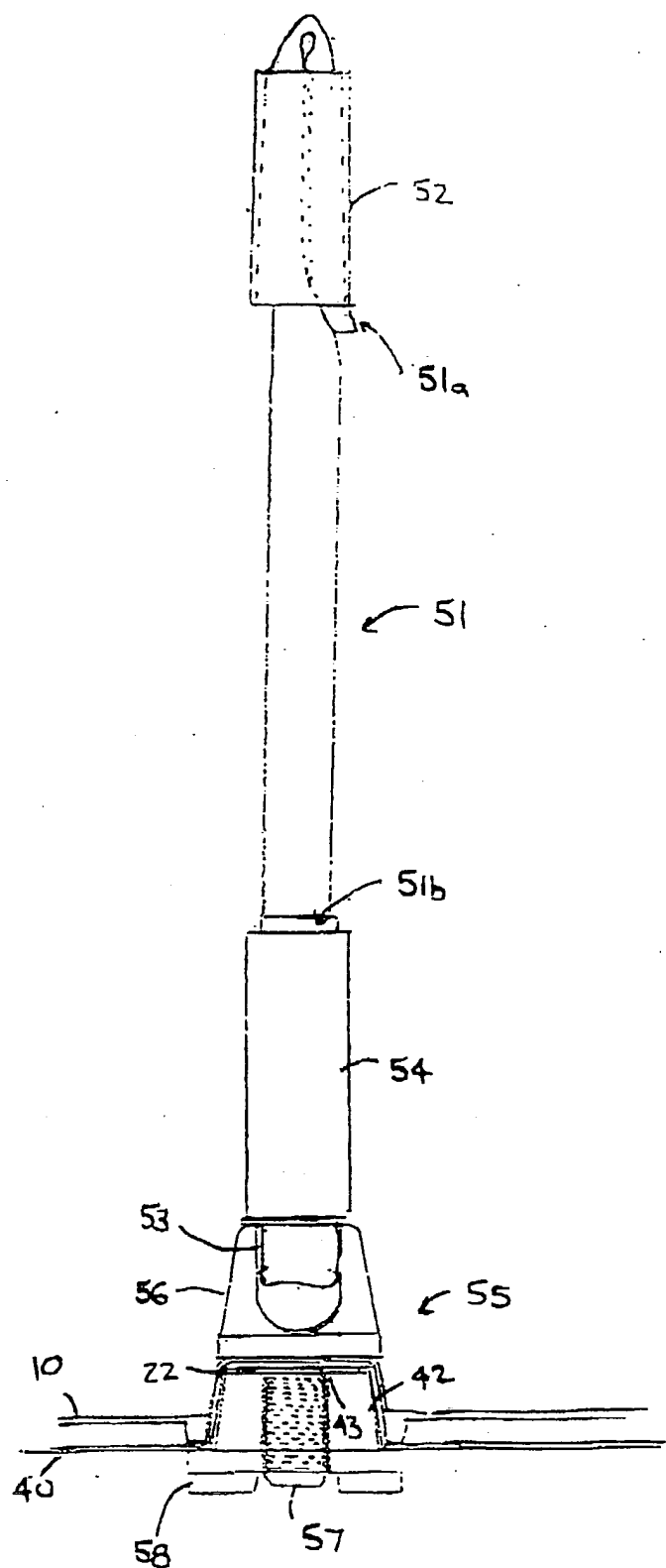


Fig. 6a

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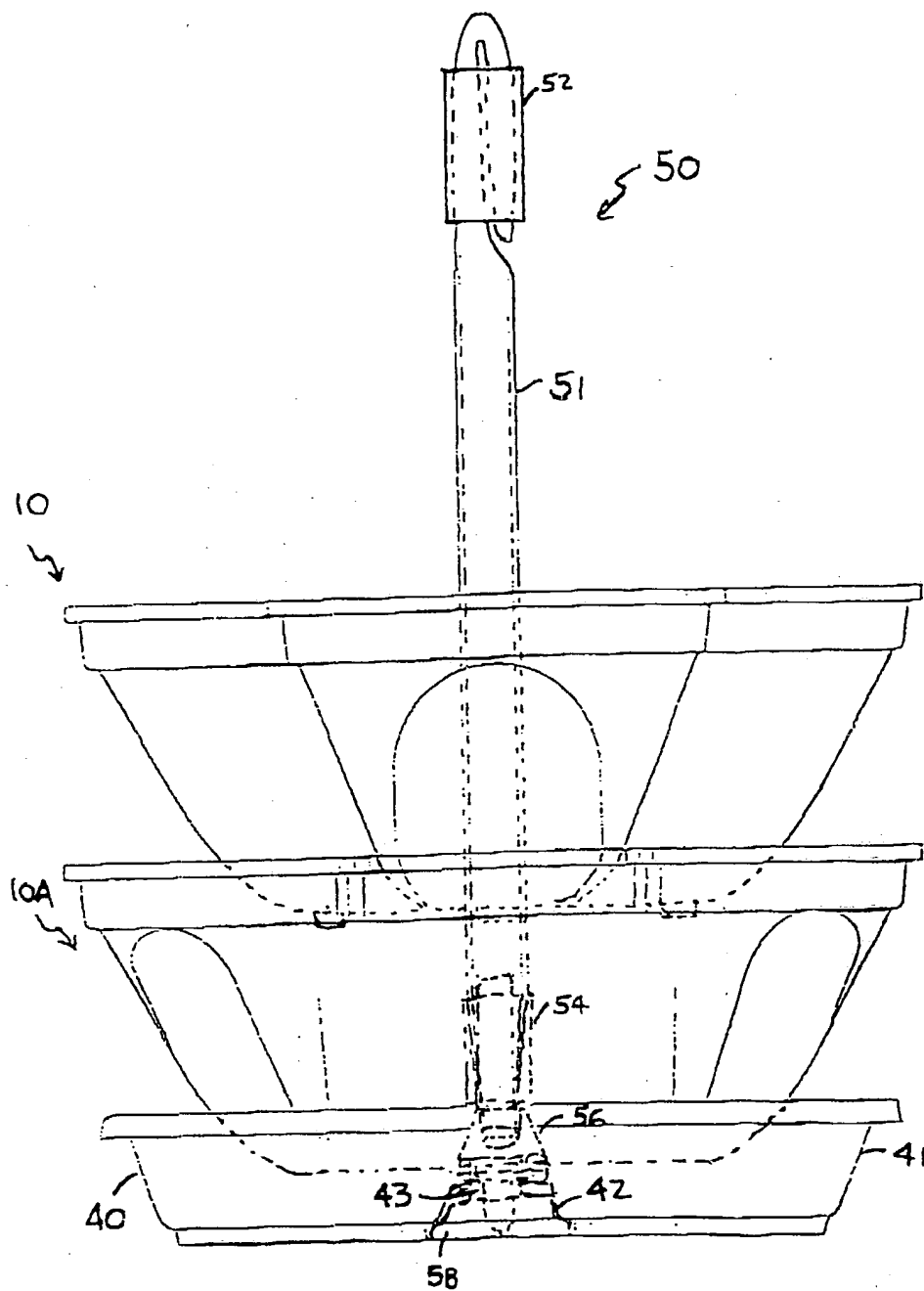


Fig 5b

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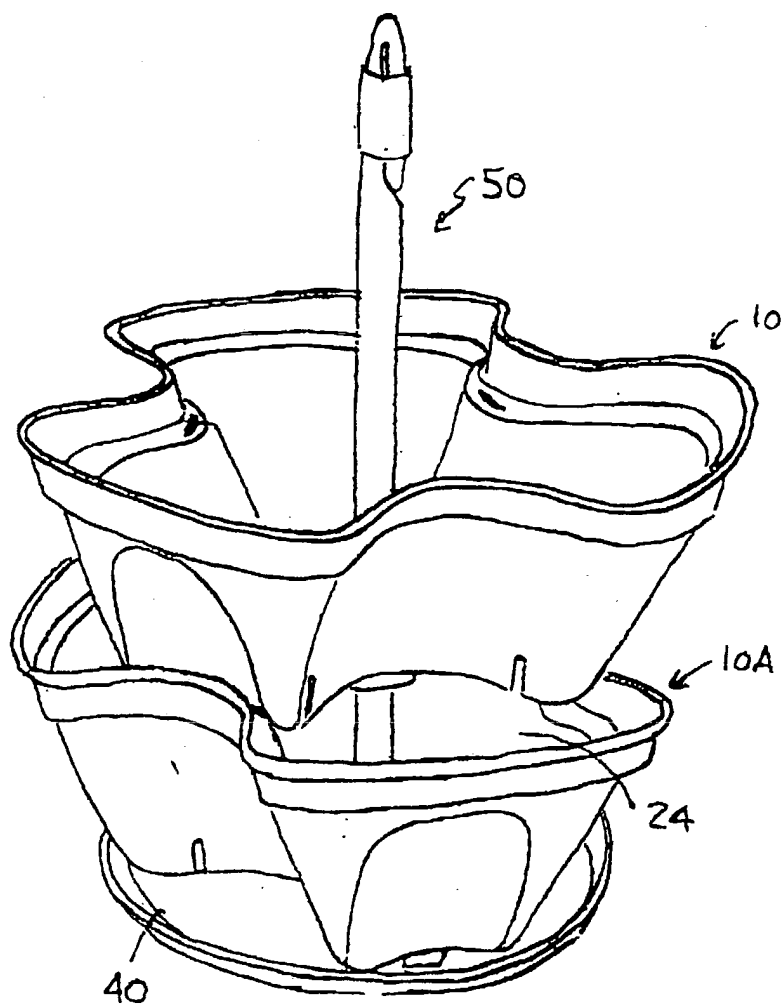


Fig. 7

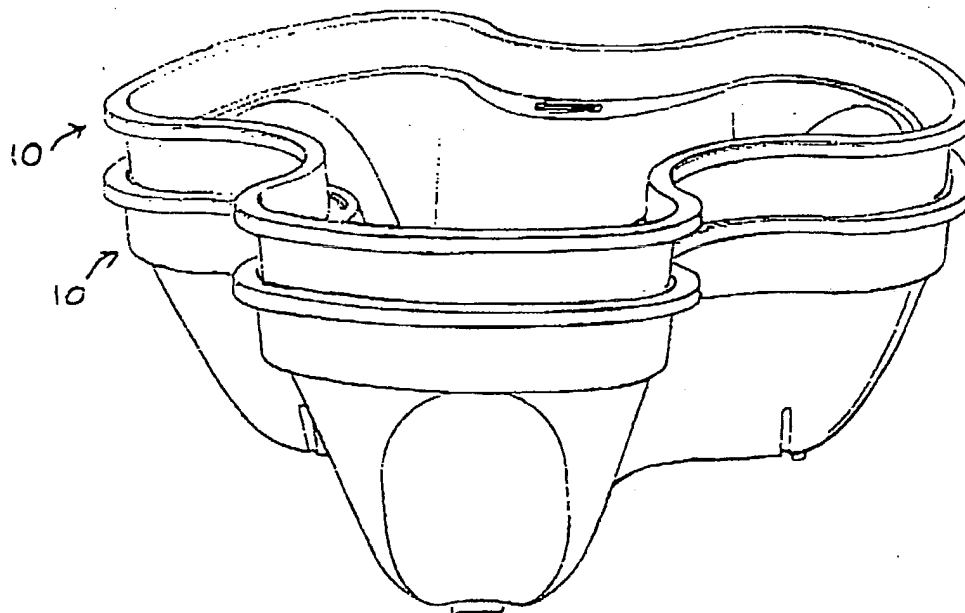


Fig. 8

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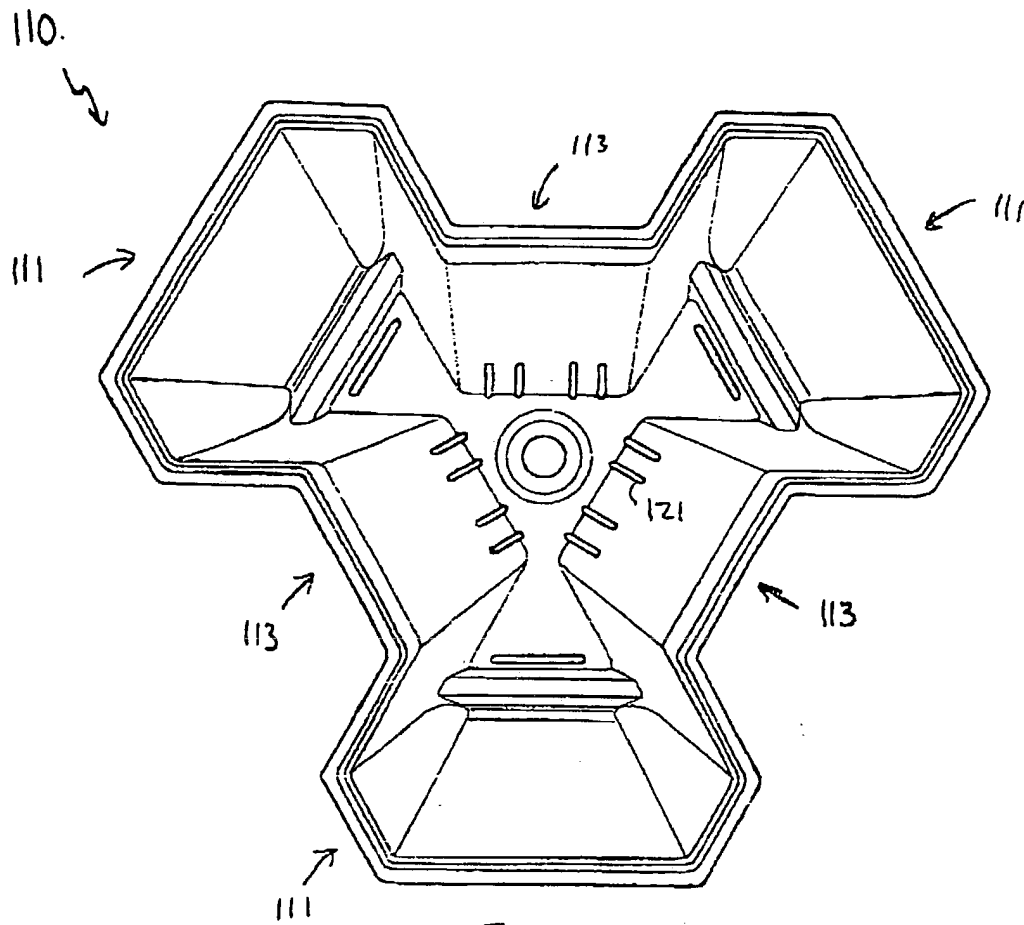


Fig 9

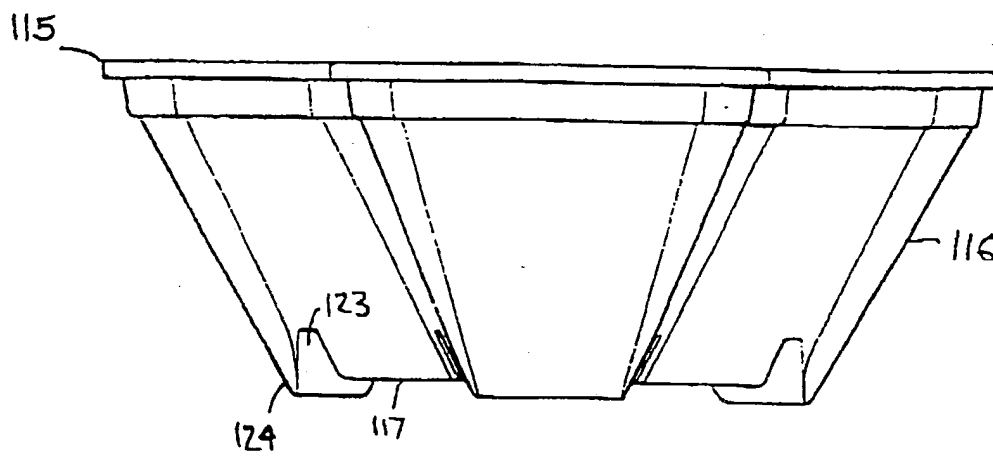


Fig 10

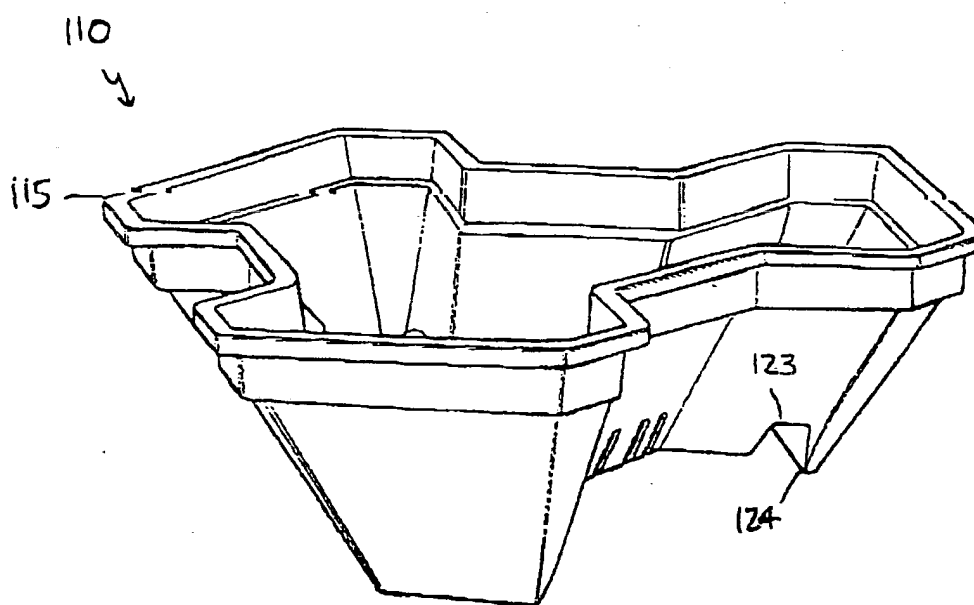


Fig. 11

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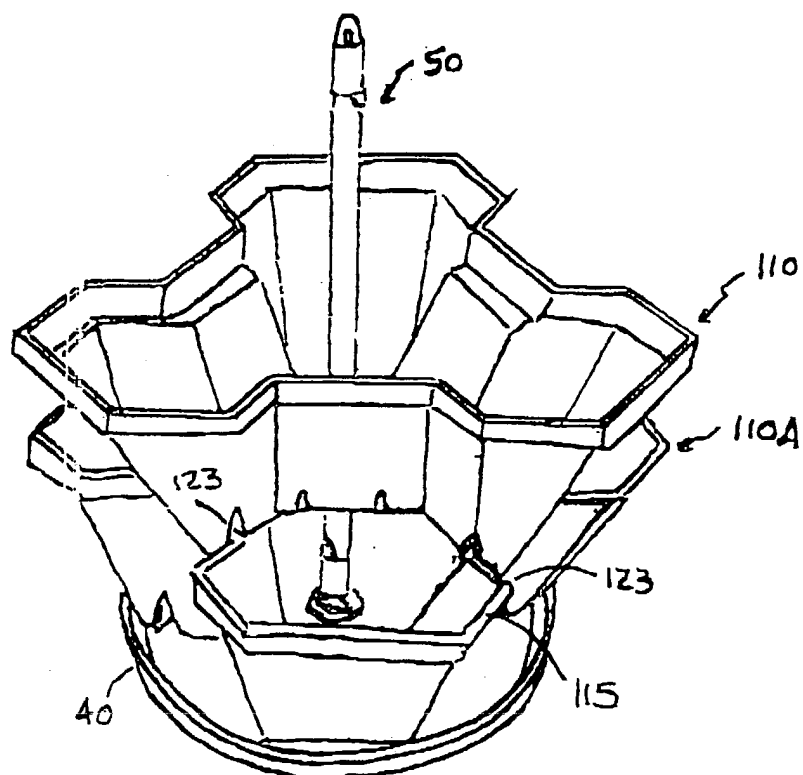


Fig. 12

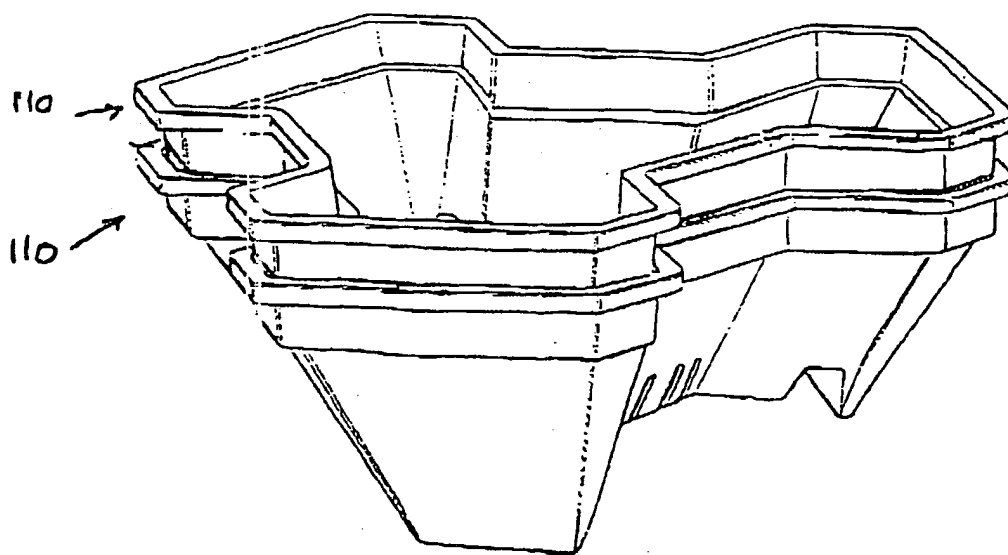


Fig. 13

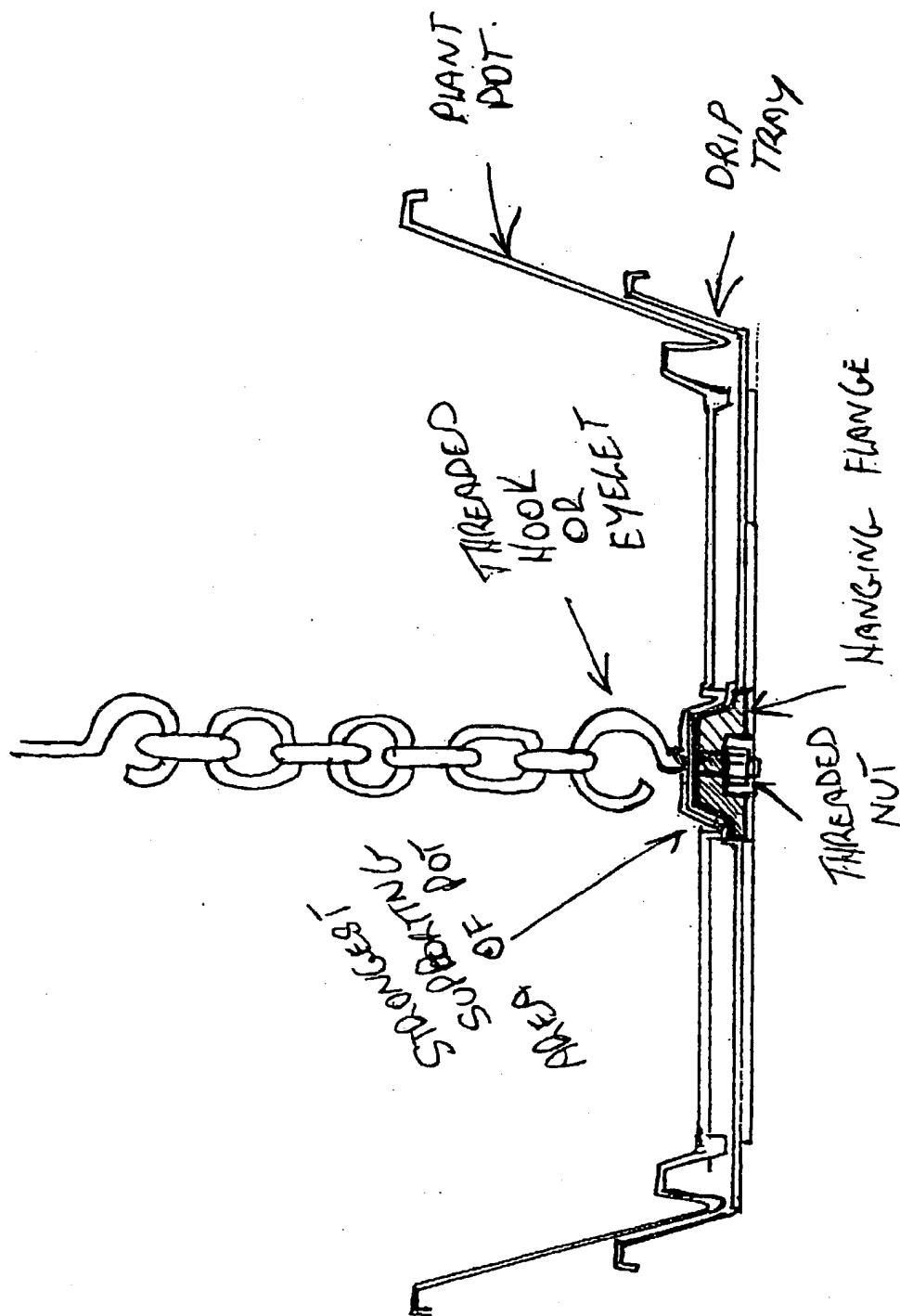


Fig 14

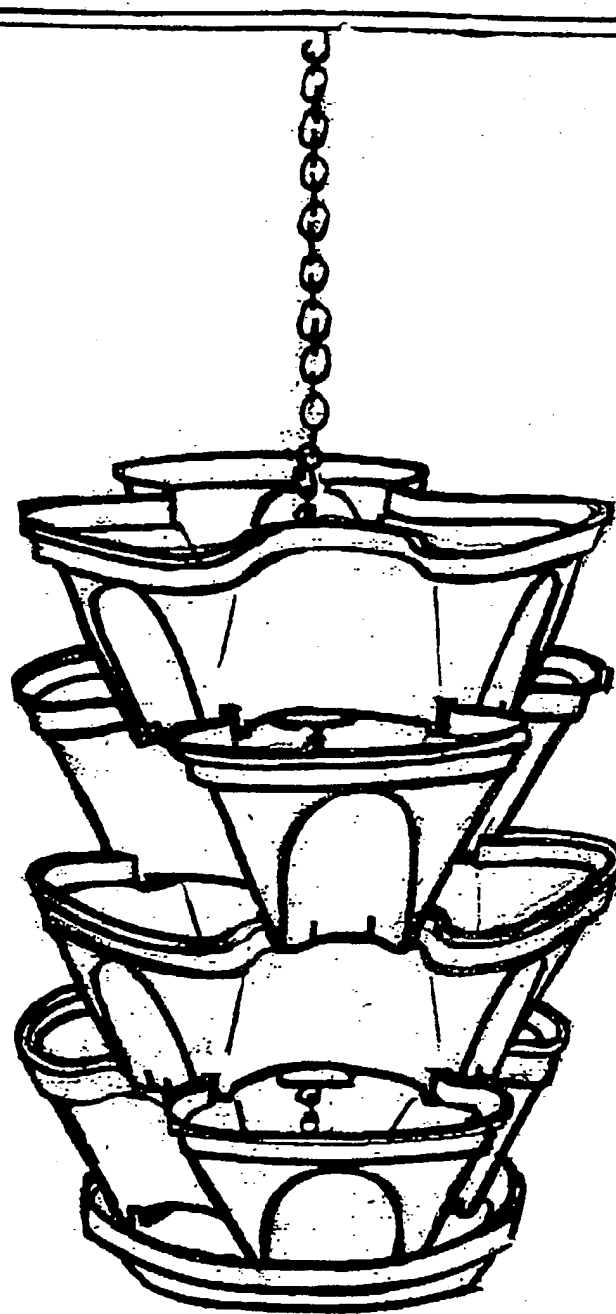


Fig 15

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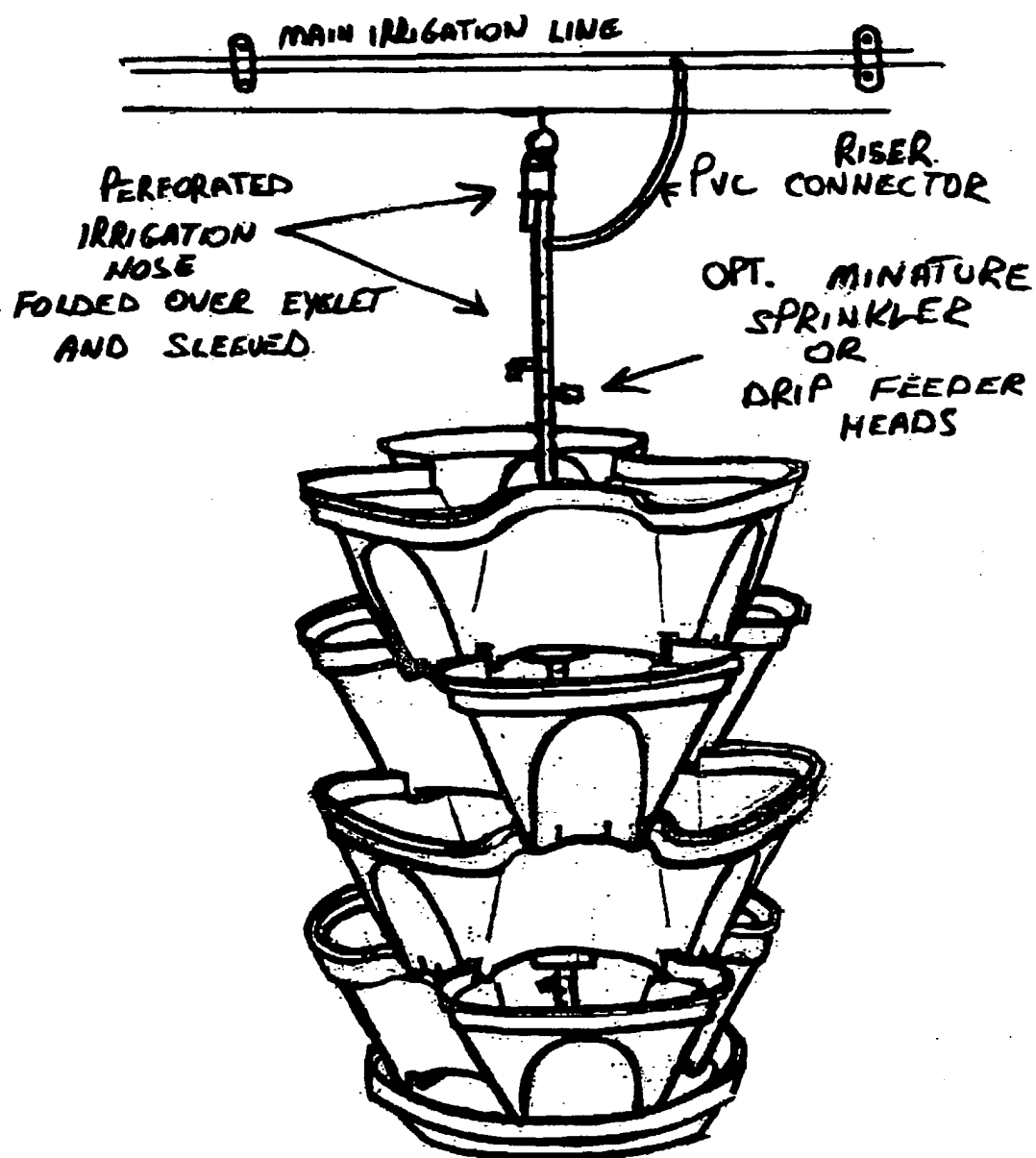


Fig 16

Drip Saucer and Hanger Flange

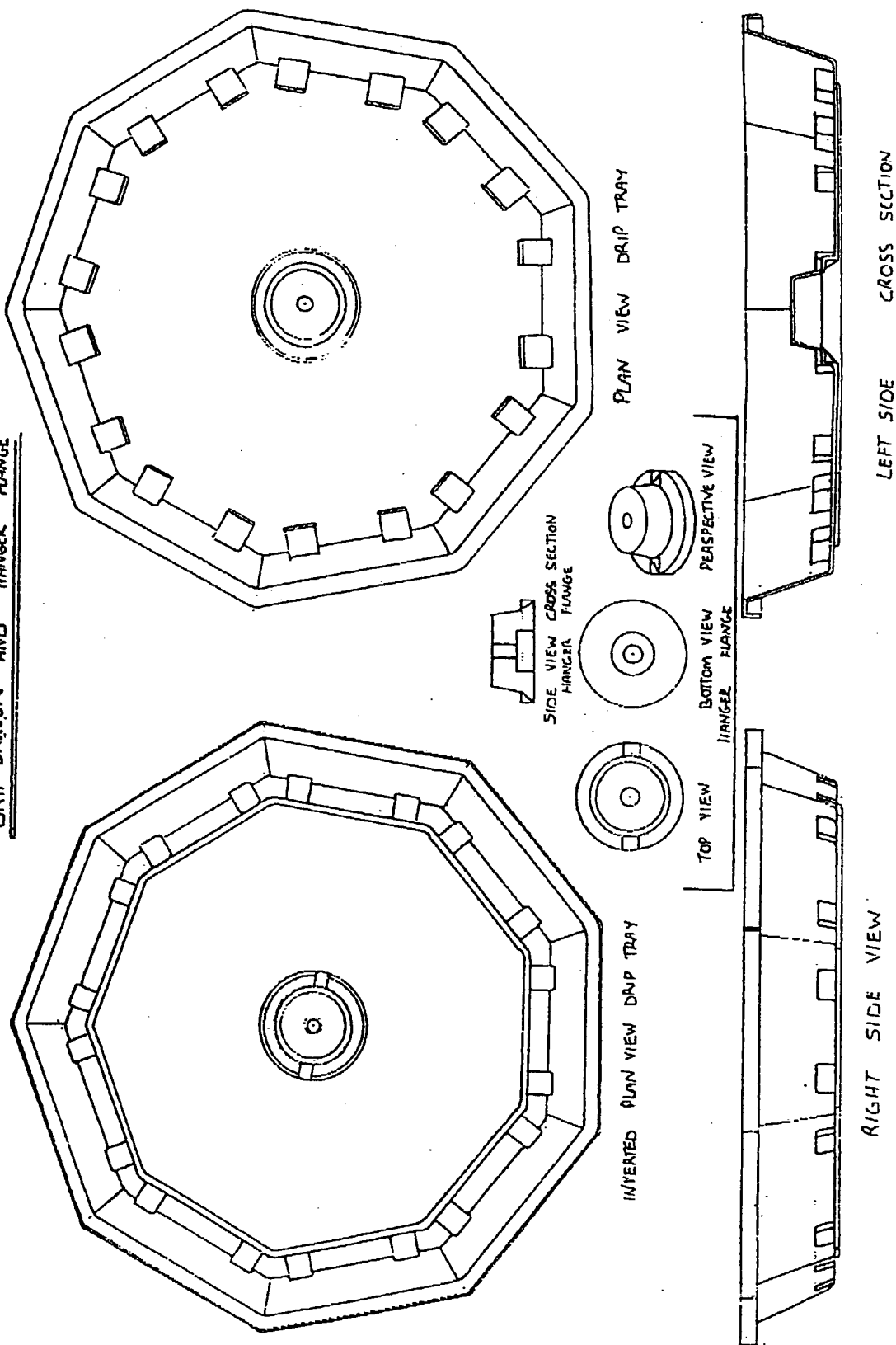


Figure 17

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.
PCT/AU 98/00432

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER																						
Int Cl ⁶ : A01G 9/02																						
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC																						
B. FIELDS SEARCHED																						
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC: A01G 9/00, 9/02																						
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched AU: IPC as above																						
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) WPAT: P13/DC and ((PLANT: or SHRUB:) (3N) (POT: or CONTAINER# or RECEPTACLE#)) and (STACK: or NEST: or SEAT: or LOCAT:)																						
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT																						
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.																				
X	US 4614056 A (FARKAS) 30 September 1986 figures 5-6; column 3, lines 12-34	1-7, 12-18																				
Y	figures 5-6; column 3, lines 12-34	8-11, 19, 20																				
Y	EP 291384 A1 (MAIRIE DE NANTES) 17 November 1988 figures 8-10; column 3, line 42 - column 4, line 13	8-11, 19, 20																				
X	EP 142471 A2 (GERBER) 22 May 1985 whole document	1-7, 12-17																				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex																						
<p>* Special categories of cited documents:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>"A"</td> <td>document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</td> <td>"T"</td> <td>later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"E"</td> <td>earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</td> <td>"X"</td> <td>document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"L"</td> <td>document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</td> <td>"Y"</td> <td>document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"O"</td> <td>document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</td> <td>"&"</td> <td>document member of the same patent family</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"P"</td> <td>document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention	"E"	earlier document but published on or after the international filing date	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone	"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art	"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&"	document member of the same patent family	"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention																			
"E"	earlier document but published on or after the international filing date	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone																			
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"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&"	document member of the same patent family																			
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed																					
Date of the actual completion of the international search 01 July 1998		Date of mailing of the international search report - 9 JUL 1998																				
Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200 WODEN ACT 2606 AUSTRALIA Facsimile No.: (02) 6285 3929		Authorized officer JEFFREY CARL Telephone No.: (02) 6283 2543																				

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/AU 98/00432

C (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5309671 A (BYUN) 10 May 1994 figures 2c, 3c	1-7, 12-17
X	FR 2715269 A1 (MARQUE) 28 July 1995 whole document	1-7, 12-17